

## Message Text

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P R 121055Z DEC 77  
FM AMEMBASSY LISBON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4041  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MADRID  
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AMCONSUL OPORTO  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA  
USMISSION USNATO  
DIA WASHDC  
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER  
COMUSFORAZ LAJES FLD AZ  
USNMR SHAPE BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 4 LISBON 9441

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PO  
SUBJECT: MARIO SOARES REFLECTS ON CONFIDENCE MOTION AND  
CASTS DOUBT UPON GOVERNMENT OF MANAGERIAL COMPETENCE

REF: (A) LISBON 8781 (DTG 151220Z NOV 77) (B) LISBON 8629  
(DTG 091917Z NOV 77), (C) LISBON 9298 (DTG 051657Z DEC 77)

SUMMARY: SOARES IS SATISFIED WITH HIS DECISION AND THE  
OUTCOME; GIVEN ECONOMIC REALITIES AND THE ARRAY OF LEFT AND  
RIGHT AGAINST HIM TO HAVE HUNG ON LONGER WOULD HAVE CONTRI-  
BUTED TO POLITICAL POLARIZATION. MOST IMPORTANTLY, HE "EXITED  
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WITH HONOR." THE PCP OFFERED ITS SUPPORT IN RETURN FOR  
"ONLY A GESTURE;" WHEN THIS WAS REJECTED AND THE PCP VOTED  
AGAINST, IT MUFFED A CHANCE TO EMBARRASS SOARES AND  
WEAKEN THE PS. SOARES FEARS EANES' IDEA OF A GOVERNMENT  
OF MANAGERIAL COMPETENCE, IS A NON-STARTER. THERE  
ARE FEW CANDIDATES TO HEAD IT, ASSEMBLY SUPPORT WILL BE  
DIFFICULT, THE SOCIALISTS CANNOT PARTICIPATE WITHOUT

ASSURING THEIR OWN DESTRUCTION, AND THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE CRISIS WILL DRAG IT INEVITABLY TO THE RIGHT. WITHOUT A POLITICAL BASE IT CAN ONLY STEM PCP RESURGENCE IN AREAS SUCH AS THE ALENTEJO WITH FORCE, MOVING PORTUGAL ONE STEP CLOSER TO DICTATORSHIP. SOARES IS WILLING TO TRY ANOTHER GOVERNMENT OF SOCIALISTS PLUS INDEPENDENTS--THIS TIME STRETCHING THE CONCEPT OF INDEPENDENTS TO INCLUDE PARTICIPATION BY OTHER DEMOCRATIC PARTIES SHORT OF COALITION--BUT NOT UNTIL IT IS CLEAR OTHER ALTERNATIVES HAVE BEEN EXHAUSTED. THIS COULD TAKE SEVERAL MONTHS, AND HE WELCOMES THE RESPITE. HE DOES NOT EXPECT A PRIME MINISTER TO BE NAMED THIS WEEK. HE SUGGESTS WE PROCEED WITH MULTI-LATERAL LOAN BUT ADJUST THE DETAILED NEGOTIATIONS TO COINCIDE CLOSELY WITH EANES' EFFORTS TO BRING THE PARTIES TOGETHER. END SUMMARY.

1. SOARES MOOD: SOARES CAME TO LUNCH AT HIS INITIATIVE DECEMBER 10 TO REVIEW WITH ME THE LAST MINUTE MANEUVERING ON THE CONFIDENCE MOTION AND THE STATE OF PLAY ON A NEW GOVERNMENT. HE WAS ON HIS WAY TO SEE THE PRESIDENT, WAS IN GOOD SPIRITS, AND WAS DISPOSED TO COOPERATE IN ANY DEMOCRATIC SOLUTION THAT HE FELT WOULD NOT RESULT IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY. HE CONTINUES TO REGARD THE SOCIALISTS AS THE MAJOR STABILIZING FORCE BETWEEN THE GROWING EXTREMES OF RIGHT AND LEFT. HAD THE SOCIALISTS STAYED IN UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT EXISTED PRIOR TO CONFIDENTIAL

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THE VOTE THIS STABILIZING FORCE COULD HAVE BEEN DESTROYED. THUS HE HAD NO REGRETS ABOUT HIS DECISION TO "CLARIFY THE SITUATION" THROUGH THE CONFIDENCE MOTION.

2. THE EXIT: SOARES TOOK SATISFACTION IN THE DIGNITY WITH WHICH HE LEFT WITHOUT COMPROMISING HIS PRINCIPLES. RECALLING OUR EARLIER CONVERSATIONS (REFS A AND B) HE HAD RECOGNIZED THAT BOTH RIGHT AND LEFT WERE CLOSING IN AND UNLESS HE COULD DRAMATIZE THE NEED FOR AN IMF SOLUTION THERE WAS NO POSSIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTING IT. WHEN HE REALIZED HE COULD NOT BRING THE PSD AND CDS ALONG HE WORRIED ABOUT FINDING AN EXIT WITH HONOR. SUPPORT FROM THE PCP WOULD NOT HAVE MET THIS CRITERION. MOREOVER THE SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT COULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED LONGER THAN THREE MONTHS ON SUFFERANCE OF THE PCP, AND IT HAD BEEN HIS INTENTION TO RESIGN HAD THE PCP VOTED FAVORABLY. WHILE A DICTATORSHIP OF ANY KIND IS BAD, A DICTATORSHIP OF THE LEFT IS THE MORE SERIOUS DANGER FOR PORTUGAL BECAUSE IT WOULD LAST; A DICTATORSHIP OF THE RIGHT COULD NOT LAST MORE THAN A YEAR.

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
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AMEMBASSY MADRID  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMCONSUL OPORTO  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
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3. THE PCP MUFFS ANOTHER ONE: SOARES SAID THE PCP TRUE TO FORM, HAD AGAIN MISHANDLED THE SITUATION. THEY HAD PROSTRATED THEMSELVES IN AN EFFORT TO FORGE A POPULAR FRONT. PCP ASSEMBLY LEADER CARLOS BRITO HAD TOLD PS PRESIDENT ANTONIO MACEDO THAT ALL CUNHAL NEEDED FOR A FAVORABLE VOTE WAS A TELEPHONE CALL FROM SOARES SAYING HE WOULD REACH AN AGREEMENT WITH THE PCP. THE PCP HAD EVEN SENT AN URGENT MESSAGE VIA NETO, THROUGH PS REPRESENTATIVE AT THE MPLA CONGRESS MANUEL ALEGRE, THAT IT WAS PREPARED TO SUPPORT THE PS. BUT A TELEPHONE CALL TO CUNHAL WOULD HAVE BEEN INCONSISTENT WITH SOARES' PREVIOUS PUBLIC POSITIONS. HOWEVER, SOARES DID COME UNDER INTENSE PRESSURE FROM CERTAIN  
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PS DEPUTIES TO MAKE A BID FOR PCP SUPPORT. HE SOLVED THE DILEMMA IN HIS SPEECH BY SPARING THE PCP AND ATTACKING THE RIGHT. FORTUNATELY, THE PCP RAN TRUE TO FORM AND PASSED UP ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO CORNER SOARES BY VOTING AGAINST THE PS. A FAVORABLE VOTE WOULD HAVE PUT HIM IN AN UNTENABLE POSITION AND WEAKENED THE PS NO MATTER WHAT HE DID. I TOLD HIM THE USG UNDERTOOK THAT AND HAD FAITH IN HIS TRACK RECORD; HENCE WE WERE NEVER WORRIED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A POPULAR FRONT. SOARES FELT THE PCP ERROR HAD GIVEN THE PS NEW OPPORTUNITIES. FOR EXAMPLE THE WORKERS COULD NOT UNDERSTAND THE PCP VOTE, AND THIS WOULD HELP THE PS IN TRYING TO RECOUP ITS LOSSES IN THE UNIONS. I URGED HIM TO GIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION TO THIS AREA.

4. NEXT STEPS: SOARES EMPHASIZED HE WAS DISPOSED TO BE AS HELPFUL AS HE COULD IN THE EFFORTS TO FIND A SOLUTION BUT THE BALL WAS FUNDAMENTALLY IN EANES' COURT. I NOTED CURRENT TALK WAS OF A GOVERNMENT OF "MANAGERIAL COMPETENCE." SOARES SAW SEVERAL PROBLEMS WITH THIS:

(A) LACK OF CANDIDATES FOR PRIME MINISTER. I NAMED A FEW (SEE LISBON 9298). OF THESE HE SAID ONLY FIRMINO MIGUEL HAD THE CAPACITY AND PRESTIGE, BUT HOW WOULD IT LOOK TO HAVE A GENERAL AS PRESIDENT AND A COLONEL AS PM? MIGUEL UNDERSTOOD THIS AND WAS RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT.

(B) DIFFICULTY IN GETTING SUPPORT IN THE ASSEMBLY.

(C) SUCH A GOVERNMENT WOULD BE DRAGGED RAPIDLY TO THE RIGHT BY ECONOMIC EXIGENCIES. THIS WOULD GIVE A WIDE BERTH TO THE PCP. THE ONLY RECOURSE WOULD BE TO FORCE, WHICH WOULD TAKE PORTUGAL ONE STEP CLOSER TO DICTATORSHIP.

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5. WITHIN THE SOCIALISTS: I ASKED IF THE PS COULDN'T FIND A WAY TO LEND SUPPORT TO SUCH A GOVERNMENT. SOARES SAID HE WOULD DO WHAT HE COULD. HE COULDN'T OPENLY SUPPORT IT WITHOUT LEADING THE SOCIALIST PARTY TO ITS DESTRUCTION; THE SOCIALISTS HAD BEEN BESET WITH ENOUGH INTERNAL PROBLEMS MOVING TO THE RIGHT WHILE IN CHARGE, TO BE DRAGGED TO THE RIGHT BY A NON-POLITICAL GOVERNMENT WOULD BE INTOLERABLE. THE LEFT WOULD BE WIDE OPEN TO THE PCP. BUT HE WOULD NOT OPPOSE SUCH A GOVERNMENT. HIS PLAN FOR THE MOMENT WAS TO PLAY A LOW KEY ROLE. HE WAS NOT AT ALL AVERSE TO A BRIEF RESPITE DURING WHICH HE COULD RECOMPOSE THE PARTY, REFLECT AND WRITE A BIT.

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6. A SECOND SOARES GOVERNMENT; I DOUBTED SOARES WOULD BE GIVEN SUCH A RESPITE. WITHOUT THE PS NO POLITICAL COMBINATION WAS POSSIBLE. IF THE PS COULD NOT SUPPORT A GOVERNMENT OF "COMPETENCE," THEN SUCH A GOVERNMENT COULD ONLY FUNCTION ON AN INTERIM BASIS. OVER TIME, WEREN'T NEW ELECTIONS OR A FORMULA FOR SOCIALIST PARTICIPATION THE ONLY ALTERNATIVES TO THAT ANONYMOUS COLONEL WE ALL FEARED SO MUCH? SOARES SAID ELECTIONS WOULDN'T HELP. THE RESULTS WOULD BE ABOUT THE SAME. ACCORDING TO HIS POLL THE PCP WOULD GAIN SUBSTANTIALLY (TO 19 PERCENT), THE PSD WOULD DROP A BIT, THE CDS WOULD MOVE UP A LITTLE AND THE SOCIALISTS WOULD DROP SLIGHTLY. WHEN I ASKED ABOUT CHANGING THE ELECTORAL LAW TO FORCE A  
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MAJORITY (A HINT THE PRESIDENT HAD GIVEN ME) SOARES RESPONDED WITH A QUESTION "WHO IN THE ASSEMBLY WOULD VOTE FOR THAT?" THE LAST CARD WAS REALLY ANOTHER PS GOVERNMENT AND HE DIDN'T WANT TO PLAY IT TILL OTHER POSSIBILITIES HAD BEEN EXHAUSTED AND THE GROUNDWORK PROPERLY LAID. THE TARGET OF ANOTHER PS ATTEMPT WOULD AGAIN BE THE CDS, BUT THE CDS LEADERSHIP, OUT OF CONCERN FOR ITS CONSERVATIVE BASE, HAD LACKED THE COURAGE OF ITS CONVICTIONS. IF IT HAD ABSTAINED THE PS GOVERNMENT COULD HAVE MADE IT. THE CDS HAD TO BE BROUGHT CLOSER TO THE REALITY OF THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM. AS FOR THE PSD, SOUSA FRANCO HAD POSSIBILITIES. HE WAS CAPABLE AND FLEXIBLE. SOARES' HOPE WAS TO BUILD HIM UP AT THE EXPENSE OF SA CARNEIRO. THE LATTER'S STRATEGY IS TO PREVENT ANY POLITICAL RESOLUTION UNTIL THE END OF JANUARY WHEN THE COUNTRY WOULD BE IN A STATE OF FINANCIAL COLLAPSE, THEN RIDE IN ON HIS CHARGER AFTER THE PSD NATIONAL CONGRESS. THIS WAS ONE REASON SOARES HAD FORCED THE ISSUE NOW. HE WAS URGING EANES TO ASK SOUSA FRANCO TO FORM A GOVERNMENT, KNOWING HE COULD NOT DO SO BUT, THAT WOULD AT LEAST INCREASE SOUSA FRANCO'S NATIONAL STATURE.

7. TIMING: SINCE A PROLONGATION OF THE PRESENT CRISIS COULD FIT SA CARNEIRO'S THUNDER-FROM-THE-RIGHT STRATEGY AS WELL, I PUSHED SOARES ON TIMING AND CONCESSIONS THE PS MIGHT MAKE IN A SECOND EFFORT. DESPITE HIS EARLIER COMMENTS ABOUT "RESPITE" HE WAS OBVIOUSLY ANXIOUS TO TRY, BUT NOT UNTIL HE WAS URGED (AND IT IS CLEAR THE PRESIDENT IS NOT URGING HIM, NOT YET AT LEAST). HE DID NOT THINK THE PRESIDENT COULD RESOLVE THE SITUATION UNTIL AFTER HIS RETURN FROM GERMANY (DEC 14), AND EVEN THEN HE MIGHT HAVE TO RESORT TO A TEMPORARY SOLUTION. SOARES HAD TOLD HIM, HOWEVER, THAT HE DIDN'T WANT TO STAY ON IN A CARETAKER CAPACITY FOR LONG. IMPLICITLY SOARES SEEMED TO BE ANTICIPATING THAT THE

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PRESIDENT WOULD CALL ON HIM AGAIN AFTER A FEW MONTHS, POSSIBLY EVEN EARLIER. IN SUCH A CASE HE WOULD HAVE TO INSIST AGAIN ON THE PS PLUS INDEPENDENTS FORMULA, BUT WOULD BE WILLING TO DEFINE INDEPENDENTS IN SUCH A WAY AS TO BRING IN THE OTHER DEMOCRATIC PARTIES SHORT OF A FORMAL COALITION.

8. THE MULTILATERAL LOAN: I TOLD HIM WE FACED AN OBVIOUS PROBLEM ON THE MULTILATERAL LOAN, AND A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WOULD SEEK OUR ADVICE. MY OWN VIEW WAS THAT WE SHOULD PROCEED WITH THE LOAN WHICH WAS DESIGNED AS SUPPORT FOR THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM, NOT ANY PARTICULAR PARTY, BUT THAT WE HAD TO TIME OUR EFFORTS TO SUPPORT EANES TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT. IF WE HELD BACK WE COULD UNDERMINE THE PRESIDENT, BUT IF WE CONTINUED AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED THIS COULD LEAD THE OTHER PARTIES TO BELIEVE THAT ECONOMIC SOLUTIONS WERE

EASY, AND THAT WE WERE BACKING AWAY FROM THE IMF WHICH, AFTER ALL, HAD BEEN ONE OF THE TWO ISSUES OF THE CONFIDENCE MOTION. FOR THE LATTER REASON I HAD TEMPORARILY POSTPONED OUR NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE BANK OF PORTUGAL (LISBON 9403). SOARES AGREED ENTIRELY. HE ADVISED THAT WE REMAIN FLEXIBLE FOR THE MOMENT UNTIL SOME RESOLUTION IS IN SIGHT. BUT WE SHOULD NOT APPEAR NEGATIVE. IF THE SITUATION DRAGS ON, WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO RESPOND RAPIDLY TO THE PRESIDENT'S DESIRES.

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9. COMMENT: WHILE EANES IS THE LAST BULWARK AGAINST  
DICTATORSHIP, SOARES AND HIS PARTY HAVE BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE  
THE KEY TO MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK. PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO MEN  
IS ESSENTIAL. ALTHOUGH THEIR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP HAS BEEN GOOD  
IN THE PAST, THEY OBVIOUSLY HAVE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON  
THE SOLUTION TO THE PRESENT CRISIS. EANES THINKS HE CAN  
FORCE TOGETHER AN APOLITICAL COMBINATION WITH THE MANAGERIAL

COMPETENCE SOARES SO BADLY LACKED, WHILE SOARES ARGUES THAT NO SOLUTION WITHOUT A POLITICAL BASE IS VIABLE FOR MORE THAN A FEW MONTHS. ATTRACTIVE AS THE EANES ALTERNATIVE MAY SEEM WE ARE OBLIGED TO AGREE WITH THE SOARES POLITICAL ANALYSIS. A "MANAGERIAL GOVERNMENT" IMPLIES A BREAKDOWN  
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IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS; AT A MINIMUM IT WILL FORCE NEW ELECTIONS WITHIN A YEAR. UNDER PRESSURES OF THE AUSTERITY PROGRAM SUCH A GOVERNMENT, LACKING A FIRM POLITICAL BASE, IS LIKELY TO OFFER SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITIES TO THE PCP. HENCE SOARES CAN BE EXPECTED STUBBORNLY TO RESIST PRESSURE FROM EANES FOR THE PS OPENLY TO SUPPORT SUCH A SOLUTION, PREFERRING INSTEAD TO CONSOLIDATE HIS PARTY'S POSITION FOR A SECOND ATTEMPT AT GOVERNING, WHICH HE APPEARS TO SEE AS INEVITABLE IN ANY EVENT. HE MAY BE RIGHT, BUT THE COUNTRY WILL BE PUT THROUGH A DIFFICULT PERIOD IN THE INTERIM AND THE GAINERS ARE LIKELY TO BE THE ADVOCATES OF EXTREMIST SOLUTIONS. MOREOVER THERE IS LITTLE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE PSD AND TO A LESSER EXTENT THE CDS, AT LEAST AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, WILL SOFTEN THEIR POSITION OR LOSE THEIR THIRST FOR POLITICAL POWER. IF HE GETS HIS SECOND CHANCE, AND EANES DOES NOT SEEM INCLINED TO GIVE IT TO HIM RIGHT NOW, SOARES MAY FIND THE PARTIES TO HIS RIGHT--AT LEAST THE PSD--AT LEAST AS INTRACTABLE AS THEY WERE THE FIRST GO-ROUND. ELECTIONS MAY THEREFORE BE THE ONLY DEMOCRATIC SOLUTION LEFT, AND EVEN THEY COULD TURN OUT TO BE ONLY A HOLDING ACTION IN THE HOPE THAT EXPERIENCE WOULD ULTIMATELY GALVANIZE THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND ENABLE THEM TO COMPROMISE THEIR DIFFERENCES.  
CARLUCCI

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